



# NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Oct. 1, 2013

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## **COVERED CALIFORNIA IS OPEN FOR BUSINESS**

*Historic Day for Millions of Californians Who Will Have Access to Quality, Affordable Health Care Coverage at CoveredCA.com*

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Covered California™, California's marketplace for health care coverage, opened for business today, providing Californians and small businesses access to quality, affordable health care coverage from major health insurance carriers.

"As of Oct. 1, Covered California is officially open for business — our phone lines are humming, our website is live, and we stand with thousands of Californians across the state as we kick off our effort to help educate and enroll millions of currently uninsured Californians," said Covered California Executive Director Peter V. Lee.

Today's announcement kicks off a six-month open-enrollment period and includes:

- The formal launch of the [new features](#) of CoveredCA.com. They will enable consumers to determine their eligibility for premium assistance and no-cost or low-cost Medi-Cal and to shop for, compare and enroll in coverage that takes effect Jan. 1, 2014.
- The statewide rollout of outreach efforts and marketing that will educate consumers about their options and how to enroll.
- [Forecasts and background](#) of who Covered California is seeking to enroll. It is estimated that during this initial six-month open-enrollment period (ending March 31, 2014), Covered California will enroll 500,000 to 700,000 Californians who are eligible for premium assistance to make their care more affordable.
- The opening of Covered California's Small Business Health Options Program (SHOP) that will allow employers to start shopping for small-group coverage that can start in January. This [SHOP](#) is not subject to the six-month open-enrollment period.

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Diana S. Dooley, Secretary of California's Health and Human Services Agency and chair of the Covered California Board, applauded the launch of Covered California and said, "From Eureka to San Diego, from the Central Valley to the Central Coast, we want Californians to know we are open for business. Californians can now get quality, affordable health care by enrolling in one of the many plans offered under Covered California." She added, "The Brown administration is proud to be a part of this historic change to make coverage affordable for all Californians."

By the end of 2014, Covered California aims to have insured approximately 1,050,000 Californians newly enrolled in Medi-Cal and between 840,000 and 1.2 million who qualify for premium assistance to help them pay for a health insurance plan.

Toby Douglas, Director of the California Department of Health Care Services, said, "Today marks the beginning of a reform of California's health care system, in which many of our most vulnerable and needy residents will have the opportunity to enroll in Medi-Cal. We are excited to be an important part of this historic day, and we are ready to enroll the thousands of newly eligible Californians in partnership with county offices around the state."

Dr. Robert Ross, President and CEO of The California Endowment and a Covered California Board member, pointed out that the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act promises more than just affordable coverage. "When we open the doors today in California — and the doors of health care marketplaces open throughout the country — we will be moving away from the political arena and into the implementation of a new program that will literally change the lives, and the health, of millions of Americans. I'm thrilled to be part of history."

"Here, and in every state in the nation, health care marketplaces are ushering in a new era in U.S. history, one that will provide its citizens with the health care they need, when they need it, through high-quality, affordable insurance. This is truly a historic day," said Lee. "Health care is no longer a privilege, but a right, and is now within reach for millions of Americans."

The official launch of Covered California started in Rancho Cordova, where the Service Center kicked off the opening day. That was followed by other events that "covered" the state: a news conference in San Francisco, overlooking the Bay Bridge; an event in the Central Valley at California State University, Fresno, to announce the open-enrollment opportunity to students; an event at a beach in San Diego; and a grand celebration at Los Angeles' Union Station.

Dooley added, "Our goals are bold, and we won't get there overnight. Over time, this new state of health will improve health care quality, lower costs of health care, reduce the dramatic health disparities in the state and offer choice and value to Californians. Today is the starting line. By the end of the six-month open-enrollment period, we forecast having more than 1 million Californians enrolled in health coverage with support from premium assistance or Medi-Cal."

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Lee concluded, “The drive toward making health care a right and not a privilege has been a long time in coming. The Affordable Care Act delivers on a long-unmet promise of the American dream. It has survived naysayers, Supreme Court challenges and a great deal of political pressure, but today we put all that behind us. Covered California is open for business, and our success does not depend on what happens in Washington or Sacramento. As we go forward, our success will depend on what happens in communities across California where millions of Californians have been waiting for this day to come, to call, visit [CoveredCA.com](http://CoveredCA.com), ask for help and enroll. Today is the day to ‘get covered.’”

### **About Covered California**

Covered California is the state’s marketplace for the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Covered California was charged with creating a new health insurance marketplace in which individuals and small businesses can get access to affordable health insurance plans. With coverage starting in 2014, Covered California will help individuals determine whether they are eligible for premium assistance that will be available on a sliding-scale basis to reduce insurance costs or whether they are eligible for low-cost or no-cost Medi-Cal. Consumers can then compare health insurance plans and choose the plan that works best for their health needs and budget. Small businesses will be able to purchase competitively priced health insurance plans and offer their employees the ability to choose from an array of plans and may qualify for federal tax credits.

Covered California is an independent part of the state government whose job is to make the new market work for California’s consumers. It is overseen by a five-member board appointed by the Governor and the Legislature. For more information on Covered California, please visit [www.CoveredCA.com](http://www.CoveredCA.com).

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